United Nations S/2009/682

Security Council

Distr.: General
31 December 2009

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office for West Africa

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the request contained in the letter dated 21 December 2007 from the President of the Security Council (S/2007/754), in which the Council called on me to report on the fulfilment of the mandate of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) every six months. The report covers the period from 1 July to 31 December 2009. It focuses on cross-cutting and cross-border issues in West Africa and on activities undertaken by UNOWA in cooperation with other United Nations entities and regional organizations, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as civil society and other international organizations.

II. Cross-border developments and trends

2. During the reporting period, West Africa continued to make progress in a number of areas, including the rule of law and human rights, crisis recovery and the fight against cross-border organized crime, especially drug trafficking. However, serious challenges, such as climate change, criminal activities, and weaknesses in governance and in the management of the security sector, continued to undermine progress achieved so far and to threaten peace and stability.

3. A number of West African countries continued to face varying degrees of political crises during the reporting period. Likewise, some economic and humanitarian challenges escalated rapidly, reducing the ability of West African countries and their regional and international partners to respond in an effective and timely manner. For instance, the effects of climate change, especially the flooding that occurred during the last rainy season, reached a scope and depth never seen before in the subregion. Also, criminal networks are using increasingly sophisticated tactics and are engaging in unlawful activities on a larger scale.

A. Economic, social and humanitarian factors

4. West Africa continues to face the main social and economic challenges I raised in my last report of 19 June 2009 (S/2009/332). The combined effects of the

Please recycle

international financial crisis, natural disasters, including drought and floods, food insecurity, high demographic growth and exceptionally high unemployment rates, notably among youth, continue to have a negative impact on West African economies, undermine economic growth and social development, and threaten regional peace and security.

5. The floods that recently affected West Africa were among the worst ever experienced by many countries in the subregion, with dire consequences for human security. More than 800,000 people were directly affected, and 195 deaths were reported according to official records. The subregion has yet to recover fully from the impact of those floods. Overall, changes in climatic conditions continue to threaten West African populations in a number of ways, undermining their right to security, safe and adequate water, health, food and shelter. The failure of local governments, which are often hard-pressed, to properly address the humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of such natural disasters generates frustration and anger on the part of those affected, increasing the risk of social unrest in some countries.

6. Other effects of climate change could also be observed in the prevalence of drought, coastal erosion and the spread of tropical and vector-borne diseases, including the outbreak of a dengue fever epidemic in late October in Cape Verde, that affected more than 20,000 persons. The surfacing of dengue fever, until now rare in West Africa, should serve as a wake-up call and as an incentive to strengthen the subregion's capacity to handle new health-related emergencies.

7. A willingness on the part of the international community to assist West Africa in dealing with the impact of climate change is critical. While bilateral and multilateral partners and non-governmental organizations provided substantial aid to the region to help overcome the effects of flooding, this support has not been sufficient and must be increased. In the coming year, support from donors will continue to be essential to preserve livelihoods, save lives and consolidate peace and stability in the subregion.

8. In my last report, I drew the Council's attention to the fact that food insecurity and malnutrition remain pervasive throughout West Africa. Despite the significant efforts of governments, subregional organizations, development partners and relief agencies, the situation has hardly improved. Surveys continue to uncover acute malnutrition rates in some countries, notably among children. For instance, 16.9 million children continue to be affected by chronic malnutrition in West Africa, and more than 5 million children suffer from acute malnutrition. Irregular and insufficient rainfall and the detrimental impact of flooding on agricultural production in 2009 are all likely to aggravate food insecurity.

9. In addition to climate change, the global economic crisis continues to threaten food security for millions of West Africans. Indicators show that food scarcity and skyrocketing inflation are rendering large segments of West African populations unable to satisfy their basic food needs. Those factors further contribute to social tensions and risk undermining peace and stability, and addressing them must, therefore, remain a priority for governments and the donor community.

10. On 4 December in Dakar, the relief community launched the 2010 Consolidated Humanitarian Appeal for West Africa, the sixth regional humanitarian appeal since 2003, for a total amount of $368 million, to respond to acute

vulnerabilities and to strengthen populations' capacity to cope with the multiplicity of factors affecting their livelihoods. The humanitarian community has identified the following four strategic objectives for humanitarian action in West Africa: (i) reduce mortality and morbidity in crisis situations; (ii) reinforce livelihoods of the most vulnerable people severely affected by slow or sudden-onset crises; (iii) improve protection of vulnerable populations; and (iv) strengthen national and regional coordination. Approximately 54 per cent of the appeal ($198 million) is intended to cover food security and nutrition activities.

B. Drug trafficking and cross-border organized crime

11. With strong support from the United Nations and the wider international community, ECOWAS has made substantial progress in its efforts to tackle drug trafficking and organized crime in the framework of its regional action plan. It is gradually strengthening its capacity in this field, starting with the recruitment and deployment of a special adviser on drugs and crime to the ECOWAS Commission. There has also been a decline in seizures of narcotics at European airports on flights originating in West Africa.

12. As highlighted in my previous report, however, this encouraging trend does not necessarily point to a decrease in trafficking but rather to a tactical repositioning on the part of drug traffickers. The discovery of clandestine laboratories and the unprecedented seizures of cocaine and ecstasy processing equipment in the subregion show that drug cartels are no longer using West Africa only as a transit point, but may be working on developing sophisticated on-site capacities for narcotics production. This constitutes a most alarming trend and a potentially serious destabilizing factor and threat to West African populations. Although the precise nature of its freight is still to be determined, the recent discovery of a cargo plane in the northern part of Mali suspected to have carried large quantities of narcotics is a further illustration of those evolving threats.

13. An additional concern is that the Sahel region increasingly serves as a breeding ground for terrorist networks and rebel groups, with an apparent interconnectedness between drug trafficking and terrorist and criminal activities.

C. Governance, human rights and gender

14. The holding of peaceful and credible elections, including in States considered to be particularly fragile, is an encouraging sign that democratic practices continue to take root in West Africa. On the other hand, a number of West African countries continue to be affected by political crises resulting from contested electoral processes, unconstitutional changes of government or other threats to democratic processes and governance. During the reporting period, preparations for the presidential election in Togo in February 2010 have been marred by disputes between the main political parties over various aspects of the electoral process. In Côte d'Ivoire, although significant progress has been made in the electoral process, notably in the identification and registration of voters, the fact that the election date, 29 November 2009, was once again missed constituted a setback and a source of dissatisfaction among national and international stakeholders. The evolving political and constitutional crisis in Niger continues to undermine the progress achieved in

democratic governance and rule of law, and constitutes a source of tension and instability.

15. In the past six months, the political and security situation in Guinea in the aftermath of the 22 December 2008 military coup deteriorated considerably. The brutal repression by elements of the Guinean security forces of a peaceful opposition rally in Conakry's main stadium on 28 September, in which a large number of people were killed and gross human rights violations, including rape, were committed against civilians, widened the rift between the ruling military authorities on the one hand and opposition parties and civil society on the other, and led to a significant heightening of tension across the country. The prompt and firm reaction of the international community and widespread support for my decision to establish an International Commission of Inquiry into those tragic events are indications of our common determination to put an end to impunity in Guinea and in West Africa in general. The deteriorating situation in Guinea could have far-reaching implications for the fragile peace processes in Guinea's neighbours within the Mano River Basin (Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone) and for the stability of the subregion as a whole.

16. Amending the provisions of national constitutions for personal or partisan gain and the non-consensual amendment of electoral legislation continue to be matters of concern in some West African States. In Niger, for example, a political crisis emerged from the holding of a national referendum on 4 August that saw the removal of presidential term limits. On a more positive note, in many West African countries, constitutions continue to be respected and legislative amendments are adopted consensually. Likewise, a number of West African leaders have publicly announced their commitment to respect constitutional provisions regarding term limits. ECOWAS and the African Union have condemned such unconstitutional measures, reflecting the resolve of the region to forge ahead with democratic governance and respect for the rule of law.

III. Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa

A. United Nations inter-institutional cooperation

17. As part of its regular activities to promote information-sharing and inter-linkages between United Nations entities operating in West Africa, UNOWA continued to host and participate in regular meetings of United Nations regional offices, agencies and peace missions. UNOWA also held its fifth regular consultative meeting on 2 September with United Nations regional offices and other entities based in Dakar to review the situations in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Niger and Togo, in particular as they relate to unconstitutional changes of government, security sector reform and drug trafficking/organized crime. The meetings also reviewed efforts to address the consequences of floods and the implications of the global financial crisis on food security and the socio-economic situation in West African countries generally. Participants agreed to further strengthen their collaboration, including through regular information-sharing, in addressing the issues raised.

18. The nineteenth inter-mission Force Commanders' Conference, held on 27 and 28 August at the headquarters of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in

Monrovia served to improve information-sharing and coordination on military issues among the peace missions in the subregion.

19. The seventeenth high-level meeting of heads of United Nations peace missions in West Africa, organized by UNOWA in Dakar on 27 October, reviewed developments in the subregion, with particular emphasis on the situation in Guinea and its potential cross-border security and humanitarian implications in neighbouring countries and in the subregion at large. Briefings were also provided to participants in the West African Coast Initiative, the multi-agency plan to combat drug trafficking and organized crime in the subregion. The heads of mission agreed to strengthen cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime as well as on other subregional issues of mutual concern. The working level meeting convened by UNOWA on 6 and 7 December as reported below (see para. 52) is an example of this cooperation.

20. On 27 October in Geneva, UNOWA, along with civil society representatives, United Nations agencies and experts, participated in a strategy session on peace and conflict dynamics in West Africa, organized by the Joint Programme Unit for United Nations/Interpeace initiatives. The session examined regional and national strategies on peacebuilding and security sector reform in the Mano River region and considered how a multi-stakeholder dialogue could be linked to peace negotiations at the national and regional levels. UNOWA was requested to lead assessment missions with Interpeace and the Joint Programme Unit to the region in the first semester of 2010 to further strengthen coordination in view of elaborating a joint regional framework for peacebuilding in West Africa.

21. As part of the United Nations system's regional emergency preparedness for Guinea, a meeting was convened by my Special Representative on 16 December in Dakar. The meeting was led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in its capacity as chair of the regional task force on Guinea. Participants, which included representatives from the donor community and non-governmental organizations, underscored the critical situation in the country, noting that the ongoing political crisis had further exacerbated the chronic poverty and governance challenges in the country, thereby risking the evolution of a humanitarian crisis with possible cross-border implications.

B. Cooperation with regional and subregional partners

African Union-Economic Community of West African States-United Nations partnership

22. During the reporting period, UNOWA continued to play a catalytic role in strengthening the tripartite partnership among ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations in addressing subregional threats to peace and security, as evidenced by their unified responses to the political crises in Guinea and Niger and their joint participation in international contact groups on Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania and the Mano River Basin.

23. UNOWA also participated in and contributed to major activities and meetings convened by ECOWAS in Abuja, including the ministerial meeting of the Mediation and Security Council on 24 August and the extraordinary summit of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government on 17 October. The Office also participated in the

twenty-sixth meeting of the ECOWAS committee of chiefs of defence staff held in Freetown from 9 to 11 December. At that meeting, issues relating to the structure of the ECOWAS standby force main brigade were considered in order to comply with the 2010 African Union deadline for the operationalization of standby forces arrangement for Africa's regional economic communities.

C. Governance

24. As per the recommendations of my previous report (S/2009/332), during the reporting period, UNOWA paid considerable attention and effort to addressing political and governance issues in the subregion, in particular to unconstitutional changes of government, in close consultation with ECOWAS and the African Union.

Guinea

25. My Special Representative has remained actively engaged in promoting a rapid return to constitutional order in Guinea. He represented the United Nations at the sixth through ninth sessions of the International Contact Group on Guinea, which were held, respectively, on 3 and 4 September in Conakry, on 22 September in New York, on 12 October in Abuja and on 13 December in Ouagadougou.

26. Following the announcement in early September by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, President of the National Council for Democracy and Development, that he intended to run in the upcoming presidential election, on 17 September the African Union Peace and Security Council decided to impose "appropriate sanctions against him and all other individuals, both civilian and military, whose activities are in contravention with" the previous commitment of the National Council for Democracy and Development not to field candidates in the election. The Contact Group welcomed this decision, and ECOWAS, with the support of the African Union, later appointed President Compaoré of Burkina Faso to facilitate a political settlement in Guinea.

27. The tragic events of 28 September, during which a peaceful opposition rally at the Conakry stadium was brutally repressed by elements of the Guinean security forces, was widely condemned by the international community. Immediately following the violence, my Special Representative travelled on 2 October to Ouagadougou with the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the African Union Special Envoy to consult with the newly appointed ECOWAS Facilitator on the activation of the facilitation process. They suggested to the Facilitator draft elements for the terms of reference for the facilitation, including the provision that Captain Camara be made to honour his commitment not to run in the election. It was agreed that representatives of ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations would constitute a core group of advisers to President Compaoré, while the international community would provide political, diplomatic, logistical and financial support. The Facilitator will report regularly to ECOWAS, the African Union and the Contact Group.

28. The ECOWAS extraordinary summit of Heads of State and Government, which was held in Abuja on 17 October, officially mandated President Compaoré with (i) securing the establishment of a new transitional authority; (ii) ensuring that the Chairman and members of the National Council for Democracy and Development, the Prime Minister and those who hold high office in the new transitional authority,

will not be candidates in the forthcoming elections; and (iii) developing clear benchmarks in the transitional timeline. Among other measures, the summit also directed the ECOWAS Commission to work with the African Union on a regime of targeted sanctions against those who would obstruct the transitional agenda and to embark on the design of a security sector reform programme for Guinea, with the support of the African Union, the United Nations and other partners.

29. At the meeting of the Contact Group on 12 October, my Special Representative was instrumental in getting the Group to adapt its strategy to the evolving situation on the ground, in particular the deteriorating human rights and security situation and the conduct of the facilitation. Echoing an early request by ECOWAS for an international investigation into the events of 28 September, the Group formally requested that I facilitate the establishment of an International Commission of Inquiry on those events. The Group also urged the de facto authorities in Guinea to take all necessary measures to release persons detained in relation to the events and to provide assistance to the victims, in particular those who had been raped.

30. As part of the process to establish the Commission of Inquiry, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Haile Menkerios, visited the subregion from 17 to 19 October, with the support of UNOWA and my Special Representative, to secure national and regional support for the Commission. I welcomed the commitment of ECOWAS at its extraordinary summit of Heads of State and Government on 17 October to assist in creating a conducive, secure and enabling environment for the Commission to undertake its work. The Commission became operational on 18 November and conducted its investigation on the ground from 25 November to 4 December. Its final report, which was submitted to me on 16 December and subsequently shared with members of the Security Council and with the Government of Guinea, the African Union and ECOWAS, establishes the circumstances of the 28 September violence and qualifies the nature of the crimes committed. The report further assigns responsibility for those crimes and makes recommendations for the International Criminal Court to be seized with respect to cases where crimes against humanity were committed.

31. From 3 to 11 November, President Compaoré held a series of consultations with the "forces vives" coalition of opposition groups and representatives of the National Council for Democracy and Development-Government in Ouagadougou in the presence of the representatives of the African Union and the United Nations. Those initial consultations revealed a wide gap between the positions of the two sides, especially the role of the National Council for Democracy and Development in the transition and the eligibility of Captain Camara to stand for elections. The written proposals submitted by President Compaoré to the parties on 18 November were rejected by the forces vives on the grounds that they did not take into account either their key concerns or those expressed by the international community.

32. The situation was further complicated by the attempted assassination of Captain Camara by his aide de camp, Aboubakar Toumba Diakité, on 3 December. That event led to further violence and human rights violations by security forces. On 5 December, the forces vives condemned the assassination attempt on Captain Camara and called for the National Council for Democracy and Development and the Government to step down and to establish a transitional authority. General Sekouba Konaté has been acting as the interim Head of State and leader of the

National Council for Democracy and Development. General Konaté made a public statement warning that the army would no longer tolerate rogue elements within its ranks and called for reform of the army. On 10 December, both the forces vives and the National Council for Democracy and Development-Government reaffirmed their commitment to the mediation process.

33. Alongside the mediation process, UNOWA is working with the United Nations country team in Guinea to develop support programmes, including specific project proposals, for conflict prevention, justice and security sector reform in the lead-up to elections. A joint UNOWA-United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) mission travelled to Conakry from 4 to 11 July to support the country team in preparing the project proposals. Two projects were approved by the Peacebuilding Support Office through the Peacebuilding Fund, in support of "Inclusive and Sustainable Dialogue" and "Human Rights, Justice and Security". Considering the evolving situation in Guinea, a follow-up joint mission, including the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNOWA, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Department of Political Affairs, is scheduled for February 2010 in order to amend the project activities and define the additional assistance needed by the United Nations country team.

Mauritania

34. Following the signing of the Dakar Framework Agreement on 4 June, presidential elections were held on 18 July and were declared free and fair by international observers. The high-level panel I appointed to follow the electoral process also confirmed that Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz was declared the winner, and my Special Representative attended the inauguration ceremony on 5 August. On 10 September, the International Contact Group on Mauritania, including my Special Representative, met in Nouakchott to review progress made since the signing of the Dakar Framework Agreement, to assess the tasks at hand, and to redefine their role in the light of the return to constitutional order in the country. The Contact Group urged the Mauritanian parties to engage without delay in an inclusive political dialogue in line with the Dakar Framework Agreement and encouraged the Government to be more proactive and to show leadership in that respect. The Group also decided to transform itself into an ad hoc mechanism that would support the consolidation of the democratic process in Mauritania and the mobilization of financial and economic assistance to the country.

Niger

35. On 20 and 21 July, my Special Representative undertook a joint mission to Niger with the President of the ECOWAS Commission and the African Union Special Envoy to consult with a variety of national stakeholders and to express concern over the unfolding constitutional crisis in the country. The mission drew the authorities' attention to the risks involved in pursuing President Mamadou Tandja's unilateral agenda, including his initiative to hold a constitutional referendum, and offered assistance in achieving a peaceful and consensual resolution of the crisis. However, it found that President Tandja was determined to carry out his plans, as he believed that he was acting in conformity with the country's constitution and in response to a demand by the people to complete major development projects he had initiated. Despite strong opposition within the country, the referendum was held on 4 August, endorsing the President's proposals.

36. My Special Representative also participated in the Extraordinary Meeting of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council on 24 August and the extraordinary summit of Heads of State and Government on 17 October, both of which were called to review the situation in Niger. The meeting on 24 August expressed deep concern over the violation of Niger's Constitution and of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, and decided to dispatch a ministerial delegation to Niamey to promote dialogue and consensus among all Nigerien stakeholders. After reviewing the prospects for legislative elections to go ahead on 20 October, the summit meeting of 17 October decided to (i) impose, with immediate effect, some of the sanctions pursuant to the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance; (ii) request the President and his Government to suspend indefinitely the holding of the legislative elections; (iii) dispatch a high-level mission to Niamey to facilitate the restoration of dialogue between stakeholders; (iv) impose full sanctions as stipulated in the above-mentioned Protocol should President Tandja fail to comply with the above-mentioned decisions; and (v) appoint General (retired) Abdulsalami Abubakar as the ECOWAS Mediator for Niger. Following consultations between UNOWA and ECOWAS on how to effectively support the ongoing efforts of the mediator, it was agreed that UNOWA would provide assistance to the mediation team.

Togo

37. During the reporting period, UNOWA closely monitored the evolving situation in Togo, including preparations for the February 2010 presidential election and the recommendations of the workshop on the role of the security sector in electoral processes held in Lomé on 12 May, in close consultation with President Compaoré in his capacity as the Mediator for Togo, ECOWAS, Togolese stakeholders and the United Nations country team.

38. From 7 to 15 September, a United Nations electoral needs assessment mission was dispatched to Lomé to assess the pre-electoral environment and make recommendations for possible United Nations assistance to the organization of the presidential election. In parallel to this mission, my Special Representative visited Lomé on 15 and 16 September to hold consultations with President Faure Gnassingbé, Prime Minister Gilbert Houngbo and leaders of opposition parties on the political situation in Togo, in particular the crisis that emerged following the appointment of the chairperson of the National Independent Electoral Commission. He encouraged the Togolese parties, including the President, to opt for a consensual solution with regard to that appointment. This issue was subsequently resolved, with the assistance of President Compaoré, and a chairperson was selected by consensus on 14 October.

39. During discussions with the Mediator in Ouagadougou on 24 November, my Special Representative drew the Mediator's attention to the continuing political tension, in particular the most recent threat made by the opposition to boycott the election unless a two-round voting system was introduced to replace the current single-round arrangement. He also raised other outstanding issues, including the revision of the voters' list, the method chosen to secure voting ballots and access to State media. The Mediator undertook to convene soon, in Ouagadougou, consultations with the Togolese parties to discuss all the outstanding issues and to appoint a Special Representative who would be based permanently in Lomé to monitor the situation and to ensure the conduct of a smooth electoral process. In the

meantime, UNOWA has been consulting with ECOWAS and the United Nations country team on the establishment of a local mechanism for mediation to assist in defusing tension and building trust among Togolese stakeholders during the electoral process.

Security sector reform

40. In response to the emphasis placed on this issue by Security Council members in their July 10 consultations on UNOWA, the Office built on the initiative it had begun in 2008 whereby ECOWAS would trigger broad regional consultations on security and elections in West Africa. As a follow-up to the workshop it organized in Conakry in November 2008 on the role of the security sector in election processes in West Africa, on 15 July UNOWA launched an issue paper with recommendations on how to improve security during electoral processes in West Africa, which was widely shared with the African Union, ECOWAS, other West African States and international and civil society organizations.

41. During the reporting period, UNOWA also developed an internal strategy in the area of security sector reform for 2010, in close consultation with ECOWAS, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. This twofold strategy is oriented towards supporting the work of United Nations actors on security sector reform in West Africa (peace missions as well as agencies), and the efforts of subregional organizations, primarily ECOWAS, while ensuring coherence with the African Union's continental vision. On 20 October, in Abuja, ECOWAS and UNOWA jointly reviewed how the latter could complement the endeavours of the former in that area, in particular in strengthening the capacity of subregional and regional institutions. UNOWA supports the ECOWAS Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security in its efforts to develop a coherent subregional security sector reform framework which would lead to the adoption by member States of a subregional action plan and national security sector reform strategies. In this regard, from 9 to 11 November in Abuja, UNOWA participated in discussions held by an ECOWAS Committee comprising West African independent experts on security sector reform regarding the initial definition of a subregional conceptual framework and plan of action. That meeting will be followed by a joint ECOWAS-UNOWA workshop with field practitioners to review and complement the framework and action plan developed by those experts. The set of documents resulting from the workshop should be available in the first quarter of 2010 and will constitute the basis for discussion among governmental experts from ECOWAS member States. As a result, the West African political process for adopting a security sector governance regional framework and plan of action will be fed from its onset by consolidated and reality-based expertise.

42. As a prelude to efforts towards security sector reform in Guinea, and as part of promoting confidence-building during the negotiation and transition period, UNOWA and the ECOWAS Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security have been consulting on the most relevant approach to include security sector-related issues in the facilitation process to resolve the political crisis in the country. As part of this joint cooperation, in a letter dated 23 November to my Special Representative, ECOWAS requested UNOWA to provide support to its mission aimed at facilitating security sector reform in Guinea. UNOWA is currently working on the framework and modalities for the provision of that support.

D. Cross-border issues

Drug trafficking and organized crime

43. During the reporting period, significant efforts were made by international actors and UNOWA to support the implementation of the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan to Address the Growing Problem of Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime and Drug Abuse in West Africa (2008-2011). Within the framework of the Plan, the multiagency (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UNOWA/Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and INTERPOL) West Africa Coast Initiative, was launched in New York on 8 July at a session chaired by ECOWAS. A key component of this initiative is the establishment of transnational crime units in four pilot countries where there is a United Nations peacekeeping or peacebuilding presence (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone) operating under national auspices. Building upon and utilizing the communications and information tools available within existing National Central Bureaux, the units would be composed of vetted national officials and external advisers who will undertake complex and multijurisdictional investigations. UNOWA will play a key role in this initiative by mobilizing political support at all levels, monitoring and mentoring the West African Coast Initiative project on behalf of the United Nations system and ensuring that it fits within the broader framework of the ECOWAS Action Plan and other subregional strategies for conflict prevention, good governance and security sector reform.

44. The preparatory assistance phase for the transnational crime units was launched with two joint assessment missions, one to Sierra Leone (16 to 20 November) and one to Liberia (30 November to 4 December), in which UNOWA participated. The assessment mission to Sierra Leone, after consulting with main local actors, including the Vice-President, found that the national authorities had commenced action with international support to establish a more robust legal framework and were making considerable progress, having already created an operational inter-agency capacity, the Joint Drug Interdiction Task Force. The assessment mission to Liberia determined that the low level of implementation was attributable to the lack of awareness among national agencies of the ECOWAS regional action plan.

45. UNOWA continued to cooperate closely with the UNODC regional office in Dakar, including by contributing to several events to promote the West Africa Coast Initiative, including the ninth semi-annual liaison officers' meeting organized by UNODC on 7 October in Dakar to review new trends in subregional drug trafficking and national, regional, and international efforts to tackle them. Participants from the international law enforcement community were briefed on the West African Coast Initiative project. UNOWA cooperated with UNODC in facilitating communication with political authorities to deal effectively with the growing problem of drug trafficking in Guinea, including recent seizures of large quantities of precursor chemicals.

46. The Office used consultations with ECOWAS and events, such as the seminar on the theme "Transnational trafficking and political instability in Africa" organized by ECOWAS and the Coalition for Dialogue in Africa and held in Abuja on 22 and 23 October, to explore innovative approaches to combating drug trafficking and organized crime in the subregion, including a proposal to establish an international

contact group on drug trafficking in West Africa. The October seminar allowed for concrete proposals to be made for political action and mechanisms to coordinate international action. UNOWA also contributed to a regional workshop on the theme "Combating narcotics trafficking in West Africa", held in Dakar from 9 to 12 November, which was organized by the African Centre for Strategic Studies and co-hosted by the Government of Senegal. The meeting, which was attended by all West African States (except Guinea and Niger), the United States of America and several European Union countries, as well as regional and international organizations, was aimed at promoting the ECOWAS regional action plan and various ways to support it.

47. On 3 December, the ECOWAS Commission convened a donor round table in Vienna hosted by the Government of Austria, and organized by UNODC in partnership with UNOWA, which was aimed at mobilizing international support for implementation of the ECOWAS regional action plan. At the round table, support and funds were pledged, including €15 million from the European Commission. On that occasion, cooperation among United Nations entities in West Africa was hailed.

Climate change

48. In response to the fact that, since my last report, the threat of climate change on human security has increased, on 15 and 16 September, UNOWA, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the West Africa Regional Office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) jointly organized a regional conference on climate change and protection challenges in West Africa in Lomé, in partnership with the Government of Togo and in close consultation with ECOWAS. The conference assembled regional and international experts on human rights, humanitarian issues and conflict prevention, who exchanged views on the impact of climate change on human security and state stability in West Africa, and who adopted a draft declaration on climate change at its conclusion. The document underscores the need to address the impact of climate change on local populations, notably the most vulnerable.

E. Human rights and gender

49. The Office continued to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights and gender mainstreaming in West Africa. Within the framework of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) and its ongoing partnership with ECOWAS, UNOWA supported ECOWAS in the launching and establishment of a network on peace and security for women in the ECOWAS region during a workshop held in Abidjan from 26 to 28 July. This network comprises civil society organizations and other networks active in West Africa. The Office also continued to facilitate the activities of the working group on women, peace and security in West Africa, comprising ECOWAS, United Nations entities, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and several international, regional and national civil society organizations. UNOWA chaired the group's monthly meetings.

50. From 14 to 19 September, UNOWA co-facilitated a training workshop organized by OHCHR on human rights monitoring for 30 United Nations staff working in francophone African countries. The Office participated in the biannual meeting of heads of United Nations human rights presences in West Africa from

23 to 25 September, during which a common framework was adopted for effective mainstreaming of human rights during electoral processes in West Africa. Participants also approved a policy paper on combating impunity through the administration of justice, in accordance with internationally agreed norms and standards.

51. From 19 to 21 October, UNOWA convened a high-level expert meeting on political crises and human rights in West Africa, which brought together 40 participants drawn from among leading human rights defenders, scholars and the United Nations. The meeting focused on the situation in Guinea and Niger and drew up a set of analyses and recommendations addressed to actors capable of contributing to peace and security in those countries and in West Africa as a whole. Since July, UNOWA has established a consultative mechanism on human rights in Guinea and Niger. The mechanism includes OHCHR, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and human rights advisers in Guinea and Niger, and allows for the regular exchange of information and analysis as well as for joint activities, where needed.

52. On 26 November, UNOWA co-organized with UNIFEM and the regional directors team the regional launching of my campaign to end violence against women (2008-2015). The event was attended by State representatives from West African countries, senior United Nations officials and civil society organizations. As part of their continuing cooperation, from 1 to 5 December, UNOWA and OHCHR jointly held a training-of-trainers session in human rights-based approaches to programming for representatives of United Nations country teams in West Africa. The training was supported by the United Nations Staff College and the regional directors team. On 6 and 7 December, UNOWA convened a working level meeting of senior political, governance, humanitarian, human rights and gender affairs officers from United Nations peace missions, regional offices and country teams in West Africa. The meeting aimed at enhancing the exchange of information and identifying concrete areas of possible joint action for 2010 in order to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to contribute to peace and security in West Africa. It focused on the crisis in Guinea and other cross-cutting and subregional issues. Participants agreed on regular exchange of updates.

F. Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

53. UNOWA continued to assist the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and the Follow-up Committee established by the Greentree Agreement in fulfilling their respective mandates. During its twenty-fifth session, held in Yaoundé on 8 and 9 October, the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission focused on the contract for emplacement of the first permanent border demarcation pillars on the ground, which commenced in mid-November. A ceremony to mark the commencement of the pillar emplacement was held on 14 December in Banki and Amshide. Some 230 pillars covering a distance of 300 kilometres are to be put in place by the end of January 2010. Meanwhile, the joint technical team of surveyors resumed the field assessment on 12 November, which is expected to cover an additional 230 kilometres before the end of 2009. Cameroon and Nigeria have so far agreed on a total distance of 1,192 kilometres of a land boundary estimated to be 1,950 kilometres long. Regarding the maritime boundary, although the delineation has

been completed, Cameroon and Nigeria are working on a framework agreement for cross-border cooperation.

54. The Follow-up Committee tasked with monitoring implementation of the Greentree Agreement of 12 June 2006 held its twelfth meeting, on 22 and 23 October, in Geneva, under the chairmanship of my Special Representative. The meeting considered the report of United Nations observers following their 15 October visit to the "zone" in Bakassi and reviewed security-related cooperation between the parties. Cameroon and Nigeria reiterated their willingness to address law enforcement-related issues raised by the local population, including the need for information campaigns to increase public awareness of Cameroonian laws and regulations.

IV. Observations and recommendations

55. The resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government and undemocratic practices in West Africa constitutes a potential threat to subregional peace and stability. In response to the recommendation in my previous report that cooperation with regional and subregional organizations in preventive action be strengthened, and in the light of the difficulties involved in restoring constitutional order, UNOWA intends to undertake, in close coordination with ECOWAS and the African Union, a broad analysis of unconstitutional changes of government in West Africa, focusing on the need to update regional norms and tools on good governance for more effective prevention. UNOWA will play an active role in mobilizing support for and underlining the importance of maintaining constitutional order and the rule of law. My Special Representative will continue to use his good offices to facilitate concerted action on those and other issues contributing to instability in West Africa.

56. On Guinea, my Special Representative and UNOWA will continue to support the mediation process with a view to reaching a solution that will be acceptable to both parties, will serve the cause of democracy, peace and stability in Guinea and will enjoy the support of the international community. This is all the more crucial as any breakdown of law and order in Guinea would have significant repercussions for other countries in the Mano River region that are recovering from recent conflict and internal turmoil. The report of the International Commission of Inquiry is a strong signal that the international community will not tolerate impunity for gross human rights violations. Further to the statement issued by the President of the Security Council dated 28 October 2008 (S/PRST/2009/27), which condemned the violence and human rights violations in Guinea and reiterated the need to fight impunity and bring the perpetrators to justice, it is critical that the report's recommendations be implemented in a prompt manner. This should also serve to advance national reconciliation and a peaceful transition towards democratic rule.

57. The recent developments in Guinea following the assassination attempt against Captain Camara and the ensuing reaction of the security forces clearly demonstrate the fragility of the situation. My Special Representative has been consulting with the Government of Guinea, the forces vives and other national, regional and international stakeholders to prevent a further deterioration of the situation, in particular by urging the Government to ensure that the security forces exercise restraint and by encouraging the Guinean parties to cooperate with the mediation process, in line with the position adopted by the international community.

58. Meanwhile, efforts are being made to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to monitor the situation in Guinea, including through the deployment of a senior political adviser in Conakry, as part of a support package to the mediation process funded by the Peacebuilding Support Office. UNOWA has also initiated the establishment of a joint United Nations security sector reform task force for Guinea with the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of UNDP, in support of ECOWAS security sector reform planning. I urge other bilateral and multilateral partners of Guinea on security sector reform to coordinate their respective approaches with the ECOWAS-United Nations supported initiative. I would also like to highlight the urgent need to support emergency humanitarian preparedness and preventive action with timely contributions from the donor community and other funding mechanisms.

59. In the coming six months, UNOWA will seek to improve electoral processes in the subregion in accordance with its mandate to promote good governance practices and confidence-building measures. Building on the recommendations of the regional workshop on security and elections held in Conakry in November 2008, UNOWA will promote and support initiatives aimed at creating conditions for free, fair and peaceful elections. It will also continue to support ongoing mediation efforts in Togo, particularly in terms of helping address remaining contentious issues and electoral matters.

60. On drug trafficking and cross-border organized crime, UNOWA will continue to contribute to the effective implementation of the ECOWAS regional plan of action and the West Africa Coast Initiative. As highlighted in my previous report, there is a need to build the police capacity of UNOWA so that the Office can fulfil its role in supporting the West Africa Coast Initiative. In its presidential statement of 10 July (S/PRST/2009/20), the Security Council welcomed the West Africa Coast Initiative and took note of the proposal to strengthen the capacity of UNOWA so that it can fully play its monitoring and coordination role in the project. I therefore intend to seek the Security Council's approval to temporarily deploy to UNOWA one United Nations civilian police officer from the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and one from UNMIL, for a period of three months, to assist UNOWA in establishing a coordination mechanism for all activities related to the West Africa Coast Initiative. While this initiative is initially anchored to existing operational capacities, namely United Nations missions in West Africa, it is critical that other fragile States in the subregion, in particular Guinea, be included in the project for the longer term.

61. UNOWA will continue to build on its ongoing efforts pertaining to the regionalization of security sector reform strategies and to focus on countries in crisis, including Guinea. In this regard, UNOWA will reinforce its support to ECOWAS in the development of a subregional security sector reform policy, in consultation with United Nations partners and other subregional actors. To foster synergies within the United Nations, UNOWA also plans to convene security sector reform experts from peace missions and specialized agencies in West Africa in Dakar in early 2010 to establish a subregional forum of security sector reform experts to enhance coordination. As the role of UNOWA on security sector reform and related issues is expanding, there is a need for more expertise. Besides the military expertise already at hand, the establishment of a police capacity in UNOWA would also help the Office deliver its mandate requirements in the area of security sector reform.

62. Gender issues, including the follow-up to my campaign to end violence against women, and the respect of human rights should remain a priority for the United Nations. UNOWA will continue its monitoring and preventive assessment of human rights and gender in situations of political crisis. In this context, the Office will further strengthen its cooperation with OHCHR, other human rights presences in West Africa, ECOWAS, the Mano River Union and civil society organizations.

63. As part of its efforts to enhance capacity within West Africa towards a harmonized subregional approach to peace and security, UNOWA will seek to enhance systematic and regular linkages in the work of the United Nations in the subregion, with due regard for the specific mandates of United Nations presences. The Office will continue to facilitate inter-mission and inter-agency cooperation among United Nations entities in West Africa and to hold regular consultations with heads of United Nations subregional agencies to develop common strategies.

64. In the next six months, UNOWA will continue to support the efforts of my Special Representative in his capacity as chairman of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and the Follow-Up Committee established by the June 2006 Greentree Agreement. In particular, UNOWA will support the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission in completing its field assessments and overseeing pillar emplacement along the land boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria. It will also support the efforts of my Special Representative to promote confidence-building between the parties during the transitional period of five years that applies in the "zone" of the Bakassi Peninsula that was transferred to Cameroon on 14 August 2008 with a view to defusing tension that arises from periodic security incidents in the area.

65. In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation to the Governments of West African States, the ECOWAS Commission and the African Union, as well as other subregional and regional institutions, for their support. I would also like to extend my gratitude to entities in the United Nations system operating in the subregion, including the heads of United Nations peace missions, the heads of United Nations regional offices and country teams, and other subregional and international partners for their cooperation with UNOWA. Finally, I would like to thank my Special Representative, Said Djinnit, and the staff of UNOWA and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission for their contribution to efforts aimed at promoting sustainable peace and security in the subregion.